



DoD-GEIS

US Department of Defense
Global Emerging Infections
Surveillance and Response System

NEWS

Point of Contact:

Jim Writer

Tel: 301-319-9418

Fax: 301-319-9213

jim.writer@na.amedd.army.mil

For Immediate Release

Rapid Detection For Bioterrorism And Naturally Occurring Disease Outbreaks

The DoD-Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System (DoD-GEIS) sponsored a Conference and Workshop on Syndromic and Other Surveillance Methods for Emerging Infections, Including Bioterrorism from 23 to 25 May in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Nearly 70 carefully selected invitees from federal, state, and local government agencies, the UK Ministry of Defence, and various academic and corporate entities with experience, expertise or an interest in syndromic surveillance attended.

Unlike traditional surveillance systems that track diseases, syndromic surveillance collects information about patients' signs and symptoms. There is no waiting for a diagnosis to be made. This is important because the early signs and symptoms of many infectious diseases, including those that could be used spread by bioterrorism, can be very similar and non-specific.

In a rapidly emerging disease outbreak, natural or bioterrorism, waiting for a definitive diagnosis would take time and could cost lives.

The meeting and workshop had two main goals.

The first was to demonstrate the feasibility and utility of current and emerging surveillance methods for rapidly detecting and confirming disease outbreaks. This was unique because while virtually all forums on bioterrorism defense recommend improvements in public health surveillance, no formal inter-agency meeting has ever before been convened to discuss the special methodological approaches required.

The second goal was to bring together developers, managers and users to reach consensus on a general approach to designing and implementing effective, efficient and integrated surveillance systems. The meeting helped create a necessary professional network

US Department of Defense Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System
Walter Reed Army Institute of Research; 503 Robert Grant Avenue; Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-7500
Inquiries: 301-319-9418 Web Site: <http://www.geis.ha.osd.mil>

dedicated to advancing these new public health methodologies. A strong foundation was laid for a military-civilian syndromic surveillance partnership in the National Capital Region.

The meeting began with talks on the principals of surveillance, the progression of naturally emerging infection outbreaks and on bioterrorist scenarios. Novel “syndromic” surveillance programs already in place or under development were then presented. This included the DoD-GEIS’s Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics (ESSENCE).

Other systems presented were developed and implemented by the US Air Force and Navy, New York City, King County (Seattle), Washington, the United Kingdom’s Ministry of Defence, Sandia National Laboratory, Johns Hopkins University and the State of Maryland, and the US CDC.

Three workshop sessions focused on building consensus regarding development and management of needed “non-traditional” surveillance systems.

Recommendations developed by the workshops will be submitted for publication in a major peer-review journal. They will also be briefed to relevant government, academic, and professional organizations that would play a role in the timely surveillance of emerging outbreaks.

Emerging infections, such as West Nile, present public health challenges. DoD-GEIS was motivated to host this meeting because domestic bioterrorism or a major natural epidemic could not only create a public health crisis but also threaten military readiness and national security, especially if it occurs in the Military District of Washington or a major DoD installation.

In order to be most sensitive, syndromic surveillance systems based on military, public and private hospitals and clinics should be standardized and integrated as much as possible. To assist in this process, The DoD-GEIS hosted this meeting and workshop.

The Department of Defense Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System (DoD-GEIS) was established in 1997 to improve detection of and response to emerging infections. It executes its mission through both the DoD overseas medical research units and the US military health system. In addition to surveillance for naturally occurring infections, surveillance for bioterrorism is a focus of DoD-GEIS.

###